

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

- A
1. A method of providing customer service to a user of
2 the Internet, the method comprising the steps of:
3 receiving a message over the Internet
4 representing a request for a call from a customer service
5 representative; and
6 operating, in response to said received
7 message, calling equipment to establish a call between
8 said user and a customer service representative.
 1. 2. The method of claim 1, further comprising the step
2 of:
3 assigning a customer service representative to
4 respond to said received message; and
5 transmitting a first telephone number
6 associated with said user and a second telephone number
7 associated with the assigned customer service
8 representative to said calling equipment.
 1. 3. The method of claim 2, wherein the message from said
2 user includes a telephone number which can be used to
3 call the user.
 1. 4. The method of claim 3, wherein the message from said
2 user further includes desired contact time information.
 1. 5. The method of claim 4, wherein the message from said
2 user further includes web page information.

6. The method of claim 3, wherein the message from said user further includes a business identifier.

7. The method of claim 6, wherein the message from said user further includes customer service representative information.

8. The method of claim 1, wherein said conference equipment includes an intelligent peripheral device, and wherein said step of operating calling equipment includes:

operating the intelligent peripheral device to initiate a first call to said user using the first telephone number;

operating the intelligent peripheral device to initiate a second call to said customer service representative using the second telephone number; and

operating the intelligent peripheral device to bridge the first and second calls.

9. The method of claim 1,

wherein said calling equipment is a telephone switch, and

wherein said step of operating calling equipment includes:

operating the telephone switch to initiate a first call to said user using the first telephone number:

8 operating the telephone switch to initiate a
9 second call to said customer service representative using
10 the second telephone number; and

11 operating the telephone switch to bridge the
12 first and second calls.

1 10. The method of claim 1, further comprising the steps
2 of:

3 assigning, in response to the received message,
4 one of a plurality of customer service representatives to
5 service said user; and

6 sending information associated with said user
7 to a computer system associated with the assigned
8 customer service representative.

1 11. The method of claim 10, wherein sending information
2 associated with said user includes:

3 transmitting said information over the Internet
4 to the computer system associated with the assigned
5 customer service representative.

1 12. The method of claim 10, wherein sending information
2 associated with said user includes:

3 transmitting said information over a local area
4 network to the computer system associated with the
5 assigned customer service representative.

1 13. The method of claim 10, further comprising the step
2 of:

1 14. The method of claim 13, wherein the computer
2 associated with the customer service representative is
3 located at the customer service representative's
4 residence.

1 15. The method of claim 13, further comprising the step
2 of:

3 supplying, over the Internet, to a computer
4 system associated with said user a web page including a
5 button which can be activated to initiate the
6 transmission of a call request message over the Internet.

1 16. A method of using a computer coupled to the
2 Internet, the method comprising:

3 operating the computer to retrieve from the
4 Internet a web page including a button which can be
5 activated by a user of the computer to request a call
6 from a customer service representative;

7 operating the computer to display said web page
8 to said user;

9 operating the computer to detect activation of
10 said button by the user; and

11 in response to activation of said button,

12 i. generating a call request message; and

13 ii. transmitting the call request message
14 over the Internet.

1 17. The method of claim 16,
2 wherein the step of transmitting the call
3 request message is performed as a function of an address
4 information obtained from said web page; and
5 wherein generating a call request message
6 includes incorporating into the call request message, a
7 telephone number associated with said user.

1 18. The method of claim 17, wherein generating a call
2 request message further includes:

3 incorporating into the call request message,
4 web page information obtained from the web page and
5 desired contact time information.

1 19. The method of claim 18, wherein generating a call
2 request message further includes:

3 incorporating into the call request message
4 customer service representative information.

1 20. The method of claim 19, wherein the customer service
2 representative information includes a customer service
3 telephone number.

1 21. A method of operating telephone equipment, the
2 method comprising the steps of:

3 receiving a message transmitted using TCP/IP
4 including call set-up information, the set-up information
5 including a telephone number of a customer and a
6 telephone number of a customer service representative,

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A 7 operating the telephone equipment to establish
8 a first call with the customer;
9 operating the telephone equipment to establish
10 a second call with the customer service representative;
11 and
12 bridging the first and second calls.

1 22. The method of claim 21, wherein the first call is
2 established prior to the second call, the method further
3 comprising the step of:

4 playing the customer a message while
5 establishing the second call.

1 23. A method of providing customer service to a user of
2 the Internet, the method comprising the steps of:

3 receiving a message over the Internet
4 requesting a call from a customer service representative;
5 and

6 establishing over the Internet, in response to
7 said received message, a call between said user and a
8 customer service representative, said established call
9 including a voice over IP connection with at least one of
10 said user and said customer service representative.

1 24. The method of claim 23, further comprising the step
2 of:

3 assigning a customer service representative to
4 respond to said received message; and

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5 transmitting a first IP address associated with
6 said user and a IP address associated with the assigned
7 customer service representative to said calling
8 equipment.

1 25. A communication system, comprising:

2 a Web server for receiving a message over the
3 Internet requesting a call from a customer service
4 representative; and

5 calling equipment coupled to said Web server
6 for establishing a call between said user and a customer
7 service representative, in response to said received
8 message.

1 26. The communication system of claim 25, wherein said
2 calling equipment includes:

3 an intelligent peripheral device; and
4 a telephone switch coupled to the intelligent
5 peripheral device.

1 27. The communication system of claim 25, wherein said
2 calling equipment includes:

3 a telephone switch with an interface for
4 receiving messages from the Internet.

1 28. The communication system of claim 25, wherein the
2 Web server is a computer for interfacing with the
3 Internet and wherein the calling equipment is a telephone
4 switch.

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- 1 29. The communication system of claim 25, wherein the
2 calling equipment is a voice over IP communications
3 system.

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